



Legislative Department
Seattle City Council
Memorandum

Date: August 9, 2010

To: Councilmember Sally J. Clark, Chair
Councilmember Tim Burgess, Vice Chair
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, Member
Committee on the Built Environment (COBE)

From: Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff

Subject: August 11, 2010 COBE Meeting: Introduction to Pike/Pine Neighborhood Design Guideline Legislation

Since 2008 the Council has been working to develop policies and Land Use Code changes to protect the unique character of the Pike/Pine neighborhood. Last July, the City Council adopted legislation sponsored by Councilmember Rasmussen that expanded the boundaries of the Pike/Pine Overlay District, renamed it a “Conservation Overlay” district, limited the scale of new projects, and encouraged new projects to retain existing older structures as part of the development site.

Background

The legislation that is now before you is part of the second phase of work on the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District. It would update the current neighborhood design guidelines for Pike/Pine, and make related changes to the Land Use Code.

Neighborhood design guidelines are used to review projects that are subject to the City’s design review process. The process has three principal objectives:

1. Encourage better design and site planning to enhance the character of the city and ensure that new development sensitively fits into neighborhoods;
2. Provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and
3. Improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors and the City early in the design and siting of new development.

During the design review process, the local volunteer Design Review Board, City staff, the public, and the developer use the Citywide Design Guidelines to design and evaluate proposed projects. Once adopted by the City Council, neighborhood-specific design guidelines augment the Citywide Guidelines. Together they are the basis for project review within the neighborhood.

Sections 1 and 2 of the proposed Pike/Pine Neighborhood Design Guidelines, which describe the design review process and the “Pike/Pine context and Priority Design Issues”, are provided for background information, but are not formally adopted by the Council. The actual design guidelines (Sections A through E of the document) are what would be adopted by the proposed legislation. DPD publishes all of these parts of the neighborhood design guidelines together for use by the public.

Summary of Proposed Legislation

The proposed legislation would do the following:

1. Add a new section to the existing Pike/Pine Neighborhood Design Guidelines that would address local concerns about building height, bulk, and scale. In particular, the new section would address developments that incorporate “character structures” (defined as buildings 75 or more years old) located on the same site. The current Design Guidelines were adopted in 2000, and do not have a neighborhood specific section that addresses building height, bulk, and scale.
2. Revise the current guidelines, primarily to update the illustrations and examples.
3. Require as part of the design review process that when a character structure is located on the site of a proposed new project, the developer evaluate the key architectural elements of the character structure, and provide at least one design proposal that will maintain those elements and the integrity of the character structure.
4. Change the decision-maker from the Director of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to the local Design Review Board when a developer requests a departure from the method prescribed in the Land Use Code for incorporating a character structure into a new building.
5. Allow an exception from the prohibition against internally-illuminated cabinet signs in the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District for signs that are no larger than three square feet, to allow more flexibility for small signs that fit in with the current character of the neighborhood.

Proposed Schedule and Next Steps

As shown on the schedule below, the Pike/Pine Urban Neighborhood Coalition and the members of the Capitol Hill Design Review Board held a public meeting to discuss the staff draft of the proposed legislation on July 7, 2010. The community then provided comments and suggestions, and raised a particular concern about the photographs in the current guidelines. Many of them were out of date, or did not show newer, better examples of the design concepts in the guidelines. The proposed guidelines now include a number of updated photographs, many of which were provided by community members.

Draft Schedule for Council action on the proposed amendments to the Design Guidelines

Action	Date
Council and DPD hire a consultant to assess the current neighborhood guidelines and recommend changes to respond to the new Pike/Pine zoning regulations	August, 2009
Capitol Hill Design Review Board (DRB) meets to discuss their experience with applying the neighborhood guidelines	January 20, 2010
Consultant produces survey of recent projects, character assessment of the neighborhood, and draft revisions to design guidelines	February, 2010
Councilmember Rasmussen meets with Pike/Pine Urban Neighborhood Coalition (P/PUNC) representatives to discuss consultant draft	April 28, 2010
Staff proposed revisions to the Pike/Pine design guidelines are published for public review.	June 7, 2010
P/PUNC sponsors evening meeting of Pike/Pine membership, in part to let stakeholders know about the proposed guidelines and how to get involved.	June 24, 2010
P/PUNC members, the Capitol Hill DRB, and members of the public meet to discuss the proposed design guidelines and related legislation.	July 7, 2010
End of extended public comment period for revised design guidelines	July 21, 2010
DPD publishes notice of the: 1. availability of the legislation; 2. public hearing on guideline legislation; and 3. environmental review decision about the legislation.	August 9, 2010
First COBE meeting briefing on the design guidelines	August 11, 2010
COBE public hearing on the design guidelines (in Committee)	September 8, 2010
Second COBE meeting and possible vote.	September 29, 2010
Council adoption of the design guidelines.	October 4 or 11, 2010

The other part of phase 2 of the work on the Pike/Pine neighborhood is to investigate the possibility of using a transfer of development potential (TDP) program to help preserve the character structures in the area. On June 7, 2010, DPD published a background report for public review that examines the challenges and possibilities of creating a TDP program. The community is now reviewing the report, and is expected to provide feedback about in late fall of this year.

Attachment: Proposed Pike/Pine Neighborhood Design Guidelines